



GALENA FIRE DEPARTMENT
Standard Operating Guideline
VEHICLE ACCIDENTS

SOG: 035

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Purpose: To safely and effectively manage vehicle accidents including scene evaluation, scene considerations, personnel safety, and stabilization.

The proper management of vehicle accidents is necessary to ensure both crew safety and positive victim outcome. The evaluation of the situation begins with the tone-out and subsequent dispatch information.

Dispatch Information

Listen for:

- Location
- Number of vehicles involved
- Types of vehicles involved
- Whether the vehicle(s) is involved in a roll-over
- Number of victims
- Air bag deployment
- Whether entrapment is or ejection is involved
- Reported hazards (fire, electric wires, fuel and other leaks, etc.)

Other Considerations

Consider:

- Time of day
- Weather conditions
- Other public safety agencies responding

Management Structure

Incident Command shall be established at all vehicle accidents. Vital positions at the beginning of an incident are Incident Command (Fire Officer), Safety Officer (Fire Officer), and Medical Group (EMS Crew Chief). The Medical Group must ensure that Triage, Treatment, and Transport are performed in sequential order.

The first order of business requires the strategic placement of apparatus for the ultimate safety of GFD personnel. The second of business is to make sure that an appropriate number of warning cones are placed on the roadway in order to reflect and divert traffic around the incident scene.

The key is to block whatever travel lanes are necessary to provide a safe working environment for rescuers and, upon stopping, always turn the vehicles' wheels away from the incident scene.

The Officer(s) shall ensure that all responding personnel are bunkered appropriately, with helmet, eye protection, gloves, and traffic safety vests.

Recognize and address any blind corners, or situations of obstructed view, in both directions, to ensure that all imposing traffic is aware of the incident by the placement of traffic warning cones, or the physical presence of a public safety official directing traffic. This can be particularly challenging during poor weather conditions or restricted visibility for other reasons (fog, smoke, etc.).



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Incident Stabilization

There are three (3) critical components of incident stabilization. They are:

- Stabilization of the scene
- Stabilization of the vehicle(s)
- Stabilization of the victim(s)

Stabilization of the Scene

One method of simplifying this evaluation is to T.E.S.S.T for scene safety. This is done as you approach the scene. This begins from a distance and continues as you get closer and focus in on the vehicle(s) and victim(s). To T.E.S.S.T. the scene, evaluate the following:

- **T** - Traffic - Control of scene safety rests with GFD
- **E** - Electrical - Poles, wires, ground transformers, etc.
- **S** - Spills - Fuel, oils, and any other hazardous materials
- **S** - Stability - Make sure the vehicle will not shift or fall
- **T** - Think - Determine what is required to safely perform victim extrication with minimal time and effort

Once the scene is 'TESSTed', establish the hot, warm and cold zones as necessary, and as follows:

- **Hot** - The 'Action' area - This will extend a minimum of fifteen (15) feet from the vehicle and only required crews in appropriate safety gear are allowed in this area.
- **Warm** - The area extends between fifteen (15) and fifty (50) feet from the vehicle and is dedicated to fire and EMS personnel that are 'staged', awaiting the completion of the extrication.
- **Cold** - The area beyond fifty (50) - For family members, bystanders, media etc.

In order to always be prepared and equipped for the possibility of fire, a minimum two GFD members, in full PPE and SCBA, and with a charged hose line and a dry-chemical extinguisher, shall be available at the edge of the hot zone. This crew shall be adjusted and supplemented at the discretion of the Incident Commander and based on the degree of damage to the vehicle(s) and its surroundings.

Stabilization of the Vehicle

Whenever operating in, or around, vehicles involved in accidents there are several safety issues to keep in mind. Some of these considerations are:

- Disconnect the battery (negative pole first) in vehicles sustaining damage in the area of the engine compartment. This may present electrical fires caused by exposed systems.
- Do not place anything (including your body) between a victim and a non-deployed airbag. The electrical capacitors that trigger deployment of these bags can remain charged even after the battery has been disconnected. It is for this same reason that rescuers should not attempt to cut a steering column of a vehicle having a non-deployed driver's airbag.
- Factors involving airbags are becoming more and more difficult as vehicle manufacturers are installing side airbags in newer models. Always be aware that many impact-absorbing bumpers use either springs or pistons to absorb energy, and these can become impact loaded and locked (like the hammer of a gun) in an accident. At any time after an accident these bumpers can unlock causing the bumper to return to its original position. This can carry enough force to break legs, knees and necks. As a general rule, never stand in front of a bumper if you have a choice to stand elsewhere. If you must stand in front of a bumper, do not lean on the bumper, and leave some 'safety' room.



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Effective stabilization requires a close inspection as the Officer and Firefighters approach the vehicle, and before the vehicle is manipulated in any way.

Always remember that a vehicle has six sides (front, rear, driver's side, passenger's side, top, and bottom). Each side needs to be visualized.

Always be alert for fuel and other leaks, power lines, ground transformers, vehicle contents, vehicle position, and vehicle stability.

Vehicle stabilization requires minimizing the possibility of movement or shifting position. When the vehicle is upright, this is accomplished by removing the vehicle's weight off of its suspension. Crib under the frame and deflate the tires. If the vehicle is on its side, upside down, or in any other position, it must be stabilized as is. This can be accomplished with cribbing, come-along, rescue struts, ropes, chains, winches, etc.

Stabilization of the Victim

Critical victims are identified for priority treatment through the triage process.

A GFD crewmember wearing all necessary protective clothing should attempt to make access to the victim(s) as quickly as possible, while protecting the victim from further injury.

Once access is successful and the victim is being readied for removal from the vehicle, the rescuers will continue to protect the victim, maintain the airway, stabilize the neck and spine, complete a primary assessment and a secondary assessment to the extent possible. Rescuers should explain to the victim what has been done and what is still necessary in order to get the victim out of the vehicle. It is sometimes necessary to immediately begin treatment for potentially life-threatening injuries. This can be done with consultation with EMS personnel on scene.